



Milwaukee County

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2nd Vice-Chair, County Board of Supervisors; Chair, Health & Human Needs Committee

Supervisor Elizabeth M. Coggs, 10th District
Chair, Finance & Audit Committee

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STATE SHOULD KEEP ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AT CURRENT SITE

Supervisors ask for more information on decision to move programs out of Coggs Center

Milwaukee, WI – A coalition of Milwaukee County Supervisors is asking for an appeal of the State of Wisconsin's apparent decision to relocate public assistance programs currently housed at the Marcia P. Coggs Human Services Center in Milwaukee. Over the objections of Milwaukee County, the State has taken over the administration of the Income Maintenance (IM) program and is opting to move the program out of the Coggs Center.

"It is unfortunate that we had to call a news conference this morning, but we simply had no choice," said Supervisor Peggy A. West, Chair of the County Board's Health & Human Needs Committee. "The State is poised to take these public assistance programs away from Milwaukee County in a way that could unnecessarily cost County and State taxpayers millions of dollars. These are funds that could be used to benefit those in our community who need the help most."

The Supervisors believe the move does not make sense for taxpayers or clients and would be a bad business decision for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- It is believed that the Coggs Center bid was the lowest submitted. Selecting another location will be more costly for taxpayers.
- Vacating the Coggs Center will leave a large vacancy within Milwaukee County's real estate portfolio, and will result in less rental revenue from the State. That will cost taxpayers \$1.2 million.
- Physically moving these services and transitioning to a new State-run facility will cost taxpayers. Costs to retrofit and build-out a new site would be even higher.
- At a minimum, tens of thousands of constituents use these services at a site that is familiar to them. Any move would require a public information campaign to inform constituents of the new location. Once again, taxpayers would be footing the bill.

“During our discussions with the Governor’s Administration and the Legislature, an impression was given that Milwaukee County would be given a fair opportunity to possibly operate the program once again at some point in the future. We are determined, ready and willing to work toward that goal,” said Supervisor Toni M. Clark, Chairwoman of the County Board’s Economic & Community Development Committee. “But the State Department of Health Services’ decision to vacate the Coggs Center indicates that the State may never return the program to Milwaukee County. This appears to be a long-term State takeover.”

“At the least, this development is very troubling for this neighborhood and the entire Milwaukee County community. All you have to do is look in this morning’s newspaper to see that the State is failing to properly manage child welfare programs in Milwaukee County,” added Supervisor Elizabeth M. Coggs, Chairwoman of the Finance & Audit Committee. “This clearly shows that Madison bureaucrats are not better at solving the complex and unique problems facing the Milwaukee urban area. It is my belief that local governments are closer to the residents and better equipped to be responsive.”

The Supervisors believe that a relocation of services to an unfamiliar site will create unnecessary confusion that will get in the way of vulnerable populations trying to access health care and food shares benefits. The State is putting up unnecessary roadblocks between government and the people it serves.

“We are requesting that the State Department of Administration immediately intervene to reverse this decision,” Supervisor West concluded. “We also fully support an appeal of this decision. We need alternative action from the State to prevent a decision that adversely affects taxpayers and clients in Milwaukee County.”

All three Supervisors are asking for a complete review and comparison of the competing proposals under the open records law.

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